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SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA STATE, COUNTY, AND CITY HEALTH OFFICIALS.

The second annual conference of California State, county, and city health officials was held at Santa Barbara October 23 to 28, 1911.

The following extracts are from a report on the conference made by Passed Asst. Surg. George W. McCoy.

Some of the many subjects of interest discussed were:

Rabies.—The prevalence of the disease in the southern part of the State and its occasional appearance further north were discussed. One case has occurred in San Francisco during the past 10 days. In Los Angeles there was difficulty in enforcing a muzzling ordinance, which was later repealed. Interesting facts pointing to the infection of coyotes were mentioned by Dr. George Tucker, health officer of Riverside County.

Smallpox.—The discussion centered about the recent changes in the State laws. The old law made vaccination compulsory in the public schools. The last legislature modified the law so as to permit parents or guardians to sign a "conscientious objection" certificate, and thus avoid the necessity of having their children vaccinated. In the event of smallpox appearing in a school all unvaccinated children may be excluded. The general opinion was that the new law is a decidedly backward step.

Diphtheria.—The discussion of this disease centered chiefly about the relation of positive cultures to the clinical features, and the difficulty of enforcing control of "carriers" and convalescents until two successive negative cultures are secured. No definite conclusion was reached, but the consensus of opinion was that we should stand by the results of culture examinations.

Dr. Warren, health officer of Coalinga, and Dr. Leroy Powers, health officer of Los Angeles, related several experiences that tended to prove that diphtheria (bacteriologically verified) is at times very prevalent among cats and that the cats may convey the infection to persons.

Goiter and erythema nodosum.—Two interesting reports were those of "epidemics" of goiter near Los Angeles and erythema nodosum near Coalinga.

Quarantine and disinfection.—These subjects were discussed in a paper by former Acting Asst. Surg. John N. Force, Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service, of Berkeley, Cal. Dr. Force's views were that present methods lack in precision, cause unnecessary detention, and inflict hardships that might be avoided.

Scarlet fever.—The discussion was on the period of quarantine that should be enforced; whether the somewhat elastic period "until desquamation is completed" was preferable to an arbitrary period of six weeks. A resolution approving of the former was adopted.

Plague.—The service representative discussed the subject of squirrel plague, dealing with the epidemiological and clinical phases of the subject. Much interest was manifested, and the county health officers, it is believed, will cooperate fully. The health officer of Riverside County has induced the supervisors to purchase quantities of poisoned grain, which is being used on a large scale there. The board of supervisors of Los Angeles County is also taking up this work.

Venereal diseases.—Dr. W. F. McNutt, the health officer of the city and county of San Francisco, described the operations of the clinic established for the suppression of venereal diseases by the regulation of prostitution. The work is apparently successful and is certainly worthy of a very complete trial. It was gratifying to note that no person raised a voice of protest against the city handling this question in the same manner that it handles other infectious diseases.

Malta fever.—Attention was drawn to the discovery of endemic malta fever in Texas, and the suggestion made that in view of the fact that goats are the natural reservoirs of the disease and that as goat raising is such a large industry in California, it would be well for physicians to be on the alert to detect the disease among persons.

The possibility of the conveyance of the ordinary contagious diseases—measles, smallpox, scarlet fever, and diphtheria—by fomites and by a well person was the subject of lively debate. Very interesting experiences in regard to the transference of smallpox by well persons were related by Acting Asst. Surg. Weldon, Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service, of San Pedro, Cal., and by others. The question was brought up especially in relation to the precautions physicians should take when seeing these cases. The writer took the ground that while conveyance from the sick to the well by a third person did occasionally occur, it was so rare that the removal of one's coat, the rolling up of one's sleeves and the thorough disinfection of one's hands constituted the really essential measures. In this connection, Dr. Warren, of Coalinga,

showed a shirt that he had designed where the sleeves were unbuttoned midway between the elbow and shoulder and slipped off with the cuffs. This is a simple and efficient substitute for rolling the sleeves.

School inspection.—This matter and the kindred one of school instruction in matters of preventive medicine were extensively discussed. There was not a dissenting voice as to the wisdom and importance of these matters. The only open question seems to be as to whether they should be under the health department or the department of education.

Water purification.—Prof. Charles G. Hyde, of the University of California, Berkeley, Cal., discussed the hypochlorite method of purifying water supplies. It would appear that this procedure should find a wider field of application than it now enjoys. The cheapness and the simplicity of application, in conjunction with the excellence of the results obtained, are the essential features in its favor.

Morbidity reports.—This subject was thoroughly discussed and its importance dwelt upon. A new form of blank for the reporting of cases of the communicable diseases was presented by Dr. Snow, secretary of the state board of health.